

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 053326

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, NATO, NO

SUBJECT: PROTECTION OF OFFSHORE OIL INSTALLATIONS

REF: (A) OSLO 434; (B) OSLO 228 NOTAL; (C) OSLO 901

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 STATE 053326

1. AVAILABLE EVIDENCE (REFTELS AND EXTENSIVE SOVIET PRESS

PLAY) SUPPORT CONCLUSION OF THE NORWEGIAN INTERAGENCY GROUP (PARA 3 OF REFTEL A) THAT SOVIET DEMARCHE IS PRECAUTIONARY, DICTATED PRIMARILY BY SOVIET MILITARY/STRATEGIC CONCERNS. WESTERN DISCUSSION OF ACTIONS TO PROTECT OIL RIGS MAY IN FACT APPEAR TO SOVIETS AS PLOY TO INCREASE NATO ACTIVITY AND PRESENCE IN AREAS OF STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE TO SOVIET FLEET, AND TO EVENTUAL CHANGE IN NORWEGIAN BASE POLICY. IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT SOVIETS PLACE MUCH STOCK IN TERRORIST THREAT TO RIGS AS THE MAIN MOTIVATION FOR NORWEGIAN AND OTHER WESTERN DISCUSSION.

2. TIMING OF SOVIET DEMARCHE WAS PROBABLY KEYED TO NORWEGIAN GOVERNMENT STUDY, ON WHICH USSR PRESUMABLY WISHED TO WEIGH IN BEFORE ANY DECISIONS TAKEN. USSR APPARENTLY FELT THAT FORMAL APPROACH TO NORWEGIANS AND PRESS CAMPAIGN IS SUFFICIENT AT THIS POINT TO FLAG TO WEST WHAT SEEMS TO BE SOMEWHAT INCREASED SOVIET CONCERN WITH NORTHERN EUROPE AND SCANDINAVIA. (WE NOTE IN THIS CONNECTION SOVIET PIQUE IN

PRESS OVER SWEDISH MILITARY SALES EFFORTS.) THE SOVIETS HAVE NOT TO OUR KNOWLEDGE APPROACHED OTHER LIKELY PARTICIPANTS IN ANY COOPERATIVE ACTIONS TO PROTECT NORTH SEA RIGS, SUCH AS DUTCH-SPONSORED NATO EURO-GROUP PROPOSAL FOR DEFENSE OF NORTH SEA OIL INSTALLATIONS. (FOR USNATO. DEPARTMENT WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING DETAILS OF DUTCH PROPOSAL.)

3. TO USSR, PROSPECT OF NATO-MEMBER PATROLS AND PERHAPS STATIONED PERSONNEL IN NORTH SEA MAY RAISE SPECTRE THAT SUCH ACTIVITIES WOULD EXPAND NORTHWARD TO MONITOR SOVIET FLEET MOVEMENTS. THE POSSIBILITY OF EURO-GROUP INVOLVEMENT MAY ADD AN ADDITIONAL ELEMENT OF CONCERN IN MOSCOW'S VIEW. THE SOVIETS HAVE BEEN WARY OF EURO-GROUP POTENTIAL FOR GREATER WESTERN EUROPEAN MILITARY COOPERATION AND ARE ALERT TO ANY SIGNS THAT IT IS ASSUMING A MORE ACTIVE FORM.

4. SOVIET MEDIA COVERAGE HAS PICKED UP WESTERN SPECULATION THAT OFFSHORE OIL INSTALLATIONS HAVE VALUE AS INTELLIGENCE-GATHERING POSTS DIRECTED AT THE SOVIET

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PAGE 03 STATE 053326

NORTHERN FLEET. WE HAVE NO INFORMATION THAT ANY NATO COUNTRY IS GIVING THIS POSSIBILITY SERIOUS CONSIDERATION.

5. THE IMPACT ON FUTURE CONTINENTAL SHELF DELINEATION NEGOTIATIONS IN THE SOVIET EQUATION IS HARD TO JUDGE. IT SEEMS DOUBTFUL, HOWEVER, ON THE BASIS OF SOVIET PRESS TREATMENT OF THE NORTH SEA ISSUE AND THE SOVIET DEMARCHE AS REPORTED IN REFTEL B, THAT THE SOVIET DEMARCHE WAS

PROMPTED BY SUCH CONSIDERATIONS. INGERSOLL

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